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A Papal Visit That Stirred a Furor . . .

Currents in the News

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. . . And a TV Show That Did the Same

Was the Soviet Union behind last year's shooting of Pope John Paul II? Two private investigations suggest this might be the case, and the White House acknowledges that it is a possibility.

The September issue of *Reader's Digest* first outlined evidence against the Kremlin. More details came from NBC News in advance of its September 21 television documentary, "The Man Who Shot the Pope—a Study in Terrorism."

Reagan administration officials said that independent information reaching U.S. intelligence agencies supports the news reports.

Both stories raised the possibility that the Polish-born Pope was a Kremlin target because of his strong support for Poland's Solidarity trade union.

NBC, in a report denied by the Vatican, said John Paul sent Leonid Brezhnev a letter in 1980, vowing

to set aside his papal crown and lead the resistance if Soviet troops invaded Poland. Other evidence indicated that Mehmet Ali Agca—the Turkish gunman sentenced to life in prison for



Turkish terrorist: The mystery still lingers.

shooting the Pope on May 13, 1981—was working for an organized-crime group in Turkey with close ties to the Bulgarian secret service. The Bulgarian agents, the reports noted, take orders from the KGB, the Soviet secret police.

Agca is said to have spent \$50,000 on air fares and first-class hotels between the time he escaped a Turkish jail in 1979 and shot the Pope 18 months later. During several weeks in Bulgaria, Agca reportedly acquired the counterfeit passport and the pistol he carried to Rome.

Both reports avoided flatly accusing the Kremlin of helping Agca. "A Soviet connection is strongly suggested," said NBC's Marvin Kalb, "but it cannot be proved."

Still, said *Reader's Digest*, "it is inconceivable that the KGB would not have known all there was to know about a terrorist as closely involved with the Bulgarian secret service as Agca was."

Radio Moscow called the reports "absurd" and "unfounded." □